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ABSTRACT

A fundamental and accepted mission of community colleges in the United States has been to provide educational opportunity for all citizens. The goals for planning community colleges in light of this mission have been summarized as: (1) providing a diversity of programs that attract students in all categories; (2) responding to labor force needs and to student interests concurrently; (3) assuring students low cost and accessible colleges in which to advance their education; (4) overcoming deficiencies in basic skills so that students may fulfill their potential; (5) providing adequate support services to enable students to succeed; (6) recognizing that an increasing percentage of college enrollments will be made up of part-time and intermittent students; and (7) accepting education as a lifelong need. Though these goals reflect the program philosophy identified as basic to community college existence, they have been challenged indirectly through increase in "quality controls" and lowered financial support. These challenges will require increased attention to the basic college mission and will necessitate more attention to scheduling for individual needs; more concern for counseling services; more use of pre-packaged courses, video and television; and more emphasis on developing new skills and student creativity. (HB)

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Maintaining the Vision of the Grail

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The Philosophy of the Community College based upon providing educational service in a democratic manner to a total population was a worthwhile dream. It has been in keeping with basic American principles of equality, justice, and opportunity. The growth of community colleges during the 1960's and 1970's demonstrated public acceptance--enthusiastic acceptance--of the "Grail." More recently, however, financial crises, tax "revolts", and changes of great magnitude have affected American society's value system and social commitments to the extent that the Visions of the 1960's have faded. Is this a permanent or temporary change? Are there good reasons to continue the quest or should community college practitioners accept the changes with equanimity? Is the Grail a false objective? To examine these questions without consideration of the consequences would be national suicide--but to realize the fulfillment of their promise seems equally unattainable. What are we to do?

Some will say there was no Grail! "The chalice is a myth and to seek it is to waste time and energy. We could spend our time in a better way. The quest is nonrealistic." The Knights of the Round Table knew better! They knew that the Grail represented a vision of perfection in human relationships, an extended search for a very worthwhile goal. And because it was important they kept their vision and passed it on to us.

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During the 1950's and 1960's the goal of providing educational opportunity for all citizens became the stated mission for community college development in most of the fifty states. This vision of the Grail was accepted at that time by educators, by legislators, by national leadership, as well as by the man-on-the-street. The United States had moved from educating the elite of our society in a few colonial colleges and their successors, from educating the meritocracy of our society in an expanding concept of land grant universities, into an acceptance of responsibility for educating the masses of our society through an expansion of locally oriented, geographically accessible community colleges. The further refinements of this goal recognizing new responsibility for minority groups, for women, for those who had achieved poorly in prior educational experiences brought the notion to a position of adopting the mission of lifelong education for each person as a counterpart to mass education. Our vision of the Grail encompassed that concept of education for each.

The idea of establishing local colleges that continue opportunity for education has been a latent part of the basic commitment to democratic government from times early in our history. Thomas Jefferson in his own advocacy for relating education and intelligent citizenship urged even before 1800 the establishment of a college in "each county or for two counties or for three . . . depending upon the population and wealth and somewhat on the topographical situation." In writing

to his friend Pierre du Pont de Nemours, he envisioned these colleges to be supported in part by the state recognizing that all counties would not be wealthy enough to provide this level of education without outside help from the state. The roots of the Vision of the Grail are deeply imbedded in the American philosophical commitments for education and socioeconomic improvements for individuals.

Much more recently in the early 1920's L.V. Koos examined a new institution that has been developing for some 20 or more years in a new states, especially several in the midwest and in the western parts of the nation. These were generally called "junior colleges." There were less than 200 of them in operation when Koos studied them but he was able to identify a series of purposes and a statement of missions that provided a common thread of philosophy and mission. Koos's taxonomy listed these purposes in 5 groups. Group I's list of purposes emphasized the rational for education at this level. The junior college provided the basic freshman and sophomore work of a 4 year degree program, a general education for those who did not go beyond this level and occupational training at a post high school level. At the same time these colleges popularized higher education, corrected deficiencies in prior education, continued home influences for those who needed them, emphasized individual attention to student needs, offered opportunities for developing leadership, provided better instruction than usually found in other institutions, and provided time for exploration.

In Group II Koos identified purposes which placed the junior college

in a continuous stream of the educational system. He pointed out that the physiological growth of youth including adolescence coincided with the high school/junior college years and ended at the time a student would be ready to move on into the upper division of a university. He pointed out that unwarranted duplication could be eliminated by this organization (6-3-3-2 or 6-4-4).

Group III purposes emphasized the fact that the universities could concentrate on the advanced education which was a university function and leave the secondary educational function to these local institutions.

Group IV purposes pointed out the values to high school instruction that the junior college should provide, including the enrichment of high school curriculum.

Finally the Group V purposes which in 1920 actually received little real attention, were focused on the community service function and what has now become a part of the "life-long education" program.

Koos's taxonomy of junior college purposes have evolved into the current basis for community college philosophy and mission. These were reaffirmed by Knoell and McIntyre in 1974 as goals for planning community colleges. They summarized goals as follows:

Goal One called for a comprehensive college which offered a diversity of programs that attract students in all categories. Decisions relating to allocating resources should consider the need for balance among the major categories of programs so that students find opportunity for meeting their personal education needs

without the pressure of limited availability.

Goal Two commits the community college to respond to manpower needs and to student interests concurrently. Commitment to this goal implies assessment of manpower needs, counseling services for students, clearly stated goals for career education, adequate program of training and continued placement and follow up services.

Goal Three recognized the need to assure students with continued opportunities for advancing their education. Low cost, and accessible community colleges need to be associated with low cost and accessible universities. The assistance of individuals in moving from one level of education to the next is a primary objective.

Goal Four is closely related to the concept of continued opportunity for education. Students who have met a blind alley ending because of their unpreparedness in academic skills need the opportunity to correct their deficiences and to unlock their human potentials. Longer time is required for some students to do this, extra attention to fundamental skills may be needed for others, and individual assistance in overcoming blocks may be a necessity for others.

Goal Five provides for student services which will enable students to be successful. Relationships between the service that students need at this critical juncture in their educational development and those which are often provided sometimes appear to be very remote. In fact, a few states have even refused to provide funds for counseling services, for example.

Goal Six recognized that an increasing percentage of community

college student enrollment will be made up of part-time and intermittent student. Current practices are often based upon the assumption that full-time students begin in the fall of one year in order to complete a two year program in the June of the following second year. Summer programs are not supported or are inadequately supported. Services are made available only to full-time students. Criticisms are expressed and even punitive procedures used for so called attrition rates. The term attrition should be meaningless in this kind of community college.

Goal Seven calls for recognition of the fact that the need for continued education is not over at the age of twenty-two or nineteen; it is a lifetime need. Present day financial support programs are often punitive toward older youth or adults. The needs of the community include many activities not always identified as collegiate or even educational. Programs promoting social outreach, individual development (such as women's re-entry programs), career development, resource center for data collection, civic action groups, conference planning, and a number of related concerns are often placed upon a "self-sustaining" financial base or are forbidden entirely.

These seven goals express the program philosophy which is most often currently identified by community college researchers as basic to community college existence.

In 1983 Henderson examined Florida's legislation over a 25 year period. He examined the session laws passed between 1957 and 1981 and identified 41 statutes that pertained to five aspects of the open door philosophy. He identified these five aspects as follows:

1. Providing educational opportunity to all persons,
2. Providing financial accessibility,
3. Providing geographic accessibility,
4. Providing diversity of programs, and
5. Providing effective counseling services.

Henderson's findings in Florida noted that 48 laws relating to community colleges were passed during this 25 year period, with the most emphasis upon geographic and financial accessibility--over 70% of the laws were concerned with these two aspects. The least attention on the part of the legislature was placed on the counseling services. Overall the emphasis of these laws was upon actions affecting the provision of financial accessibility, the provision of geographic accessibility, or the diversity of programs. Little attention was paid to the commitment to serve all people beyond the basic legal commitments outlined in the original law.

Henderson also interviewed a number of key informants in Florida who were knowledgeable of the historical development of the community colleges during the 25 year period. An analysis of their discussions provided him with the following conclusions:

1. The support for the open door philosophy in 1982 is less than it was in 1957. Both general support and political support was perceived as being less than in 1957.
2. The major problems affecting the open door philosophy were focused around the financial support of a community college system and the qualms expressed about underprepared students.
3. The socio-economic changes in Florida that have affected the potential community college population have fostered an attitude of less enthusiasm for the open door philosophic

commitments. These changes include increased numbers of minorities who have been participating, tax revolts, increasing older population, and the unemployment status of selected groups.

4. The trend toward state involvement in instituting so-called quality controls instead of providing opportunity has received strong impetus from political leadership.

An overall conclusion of this study was that although there had been little direct attempt to eliminate or cut back on the open door philosophy, there was evidence of indirect cutbacks through neglect in providing adequate financial support. There also was evidence that "quality controls" were designed to control numbers who would be admissible thereby limiting the effectiveness of the "open door."

Although Florida is not necessarily representative of all of the other states in respect to the community college philosophy, the trends which have been clearly identified in that state could be viewed as a "bellwether" (as designated by Naisbett) of other states. The most recent Legislature, 1983, took several other steps which when implemented fully will further affect the open door in an adverse manner. These include such items as a screening sophomore test to control admission to the junior level, limitations placed on prisoner education, a projected moratorium in the community colleges on developmental education in 1990, a movement toward a uniform fee structure in all community colleges, an increase in financing by way of categorical aid, a new State Board with authority to approve budgets and programs, and a continuous reminder that we have achieved "access" and now should be concerned solely with "quality."

Hyde's recent report on access does not support the assertion that access has been achieved. By defining equal access as a concept Hyde points out that it should include (1) removal of unequal barriers to attendance, whether geographical, financial, or informational; (2) an institutionally supportive climate for student; and, (3) recognition that institutional sectors operate and are financed differently.

He concludes, among other points, that minority groups do not participated in higher education to the same extent that majority members do; that the open access philosophy of community colleges is in direct contradiction with the financing principle used to fund many community colleges and that common practice results in the colleges enrolling less frequently those who are most disadvantaged; that for many community college students, convenience of educational opportunities appears to be the most important determinant of attendance; and that so called measures of quality control may be deterrent to open access.

Finally Hyde concludes that improving high school curriculum, providing individuals with special assistance, establishing off campus sites for classes, flexible scheduling, providing telecourses, providing child care, and providing career and/or occupational counseling would affect access more than other measures that have been traditionally used.

Another view of access has been presented by Zitzewitz and Alfred in their analysis of student turnaway. By defining student turnaways as the cohort of students who have considered attendance at a public community college, but never complete formal course work, they have brought to focus another group that may be a part of the total Vision of the Grail even

though they seldom have been identified. They outlined three categories of "underlying causes: (1) those which are determined by the prospective student's background--personal or family problems, individual time demands, financial resources; (2) those beyond the institution's control which are the product of the immediate environment--the availability of financial aid, the existence of competing programs at other institutions, and the availability of jobs; and (3) those causal factors resulting from individual interaction with the institution, which are subject to control via institutional policies--scheduling problems, difficulties completing registration, and difficulties adhering to tuition payment schedules."

They conclude that colleges concerned about student turnaways would be well advised to modify their traditional schedules and to provide considerably better counseling for students especially in areas related to financial aid. Other actions which would alleviate student turnaway would include offering additional sections of popular courses, developing programs sensitive to identified local manpower needs, facilitating child care for single parent families and providing counseling for newly divorced, separated or widowed adults that are adjusting to new life circumstances.

Another area of concern is the so-called dropout student--that is those who begin courses or programs and who do not complete them. In order to maintain the Vision of the Grail a college must provide specific attention and assistance to those students who are most likely to drop out. This includes attention to those who can be identified early as potential low grade recipients; those who demonstrate poor student habits; those who need to identify realistic educational goals; those who reflect a low level of

commitment and motivation; and those who need individualized instruction. Clearly, these sensitivities require more attention to faculty-student contacts and counseling services than most colleges provide, however, true concern for the problem of access will require such attention to these details.

In a recent book Clark outlined the higher education system as viewed in a cross-national perspective. Of particular interest is his excerpted article on the clash of values in the recent issue of Change. Clark in this article identifies four basic sets of values which he labels justice, competence, liberty, and loyalty. Our vision of the Grail is particularly concerned with the first of these, social justice--fair treatment for all--, although the other three are of concern as well. He describes this value as equality of opportunity in the sense of access, equality of opportunity in the sense of treatment once admitted, and equality of outcome or reward. The extremes are defined by asserting that equality of access is determined by using the academic qualifications of the individual on one hand to accepting equality of access as an open door for all on the other. He points out that most European systems find only a third or less of their youth "qualified" while other nations--Japan, Canada, Sweden, and the U.S.--approach the second interpretation. This value, however, also provides for uniformity of standards and, therefore, an ubiquitous balance in quality of outcome. Open door must also be accompanied by adequate support in order to produce an equal educational opportunity. It is easy, then, to see how the other values relate to the first and

how the Vision of the Grail is more than a mere slogan or a myth to be forgotten as a troublesome dream.

There are clearly two sources of interference with the Vision of the Grail. One is internal and the other external. (The external is another session).

Internally some of the community college leadership itself seems to have qualms about the mission of the college. The following is a list of reactions I received from a selected group of community college representatives:

1. There is not enough expressed concern among the leadership of the colleges.
2. There is a tendency to place price tags on all activities.
3. Anger and frustration is expressed rather than a search for solutions.
4. There is a overvalued emphasis on testing.
5. Limiting growth is accepted without protest.
6. Increasing elitism among faculty has gained credence.
7. Program decisions made by Legislature, why worry.
8. We have been forced to place a emphasis on student fees.
9. Funding is always inadequate. Categorized funding is limiting.
10. There is a tendency to conform to the status political leadership.

These, however, do not face some of the real internal issues as suggested by Hyde, Clark, Knoell and McIntyre, and others. There is need for restructuring within the college operational procedures.

Summary

In the future the vision of the Grail will require restructuring with:

1) more attention to scheduling for individual needs;

2) more concern for counseling services;

3) curriculum adapted to student learning styles;

4) more use of pre-packaged courses;

5) more use of video taped lectures;

6) more use of television, especially cable TV;

7) corrective education for adults with emphasis on helping people to achieve;

8) more opportunity for explorations into creativity; and finally,

9) more emphasis on new skills (i.e. computer competency, language competency).

Current trends to test and measure at almost every point of progress may seem to get in the way of the Grail, but the major emphasis for educators must be to remember that Education is NOT to measure a person's value but to help each individual to achieve! That is still the Vision of the Grail.

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